

BALLET TODAY

Russia's Many
Ballet Companies



MEET
FELICITY GRAY



A Student
Looks Forward



APPRECIATION
OF SOPHIE
FEDOROVITCH



UP-TO-THE-
MINUTE
NEWS AND
REVIEWS



Ballet Abroad



(Photo: Derek Allen)

Ballerina of Tomorrow?
(See page 12)



It Needn't be all hornpipes . . .



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BALLET TODAY

Vol. 6 Number 3

March/April 1953

BALLELOG

A VERY welcome return to the British ballet scene will be made on March 16 when Alicia Markova will dance the name role in *Giselle* at the Royal Opera House, the first of a number of guest appearances she is to make with the Sadler's Wells Ballet. In addition to *Giselle*, she will dance in *Le Lac des Cygnes*, Act II and *Les Sylphides*.

We have missed her enchanted presence here during the time she has been in America and are glad that her first appearances in England will be at our national ballet theatre.

★ ★ ★

Our bouquet of the month goes to Philip Chatfield for chivalry. During a recent performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* at Covent Garden, he danced Floristan and his two sisters with Gerd Larsen and Avril Navarre. As the three dancers were making their flying exit at the end of the divertissement, Miss Navarre slipped when halfway across the stage, had a very bad fall and obviously found it difficult to rise. Chatfield, who had just reached the wings, must have seen

the accident from there and without hesitation he came back on to the stage and, as she managed to rise to her feet, struck an arabesque in the corner and ushered her out with a wave of the arm.

There are few real ballet lovers who do not sympathise when a dancer falls and who do not understand her embarrassment. Philip Chatfield by his quick action helped to minimise this for Miss Navarre.



A beautiful study of Alicia Markova who has just returned to this country from America and who makes her first guest appearance at the Royal Opera House on March 16.

OWING TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES IT HAS BEEN FOUND NECESSARY TO COMBINE THE MARCH AND APRIL ISSUES. NORMAL PUBLICATION WILL BE RESUMED WITH THE MAY ISSUE.

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Covent Garden Wedding

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A happy picture of Sadler's Wells dancer Fiorella Keane and Covent Garden ballet stage manager Michael J. Manuel who were married on January 22. The photograph was taken by G. B. L. Wilson at the wedding reception which was the first to be held at the Royal Opera House.

Moira Shearer Returns to Covent Garden

Royal Opera House. February 7.
Symphonic Variations.

With nine curtain-calls and the generous applause of an overflowing audience, Moira Shearer received a warm welcome when she made her long-delayed return as guest artiste to the Sadler's Wells Ballet, in *Symphonic Variations* on February 7.

After a performance which was all the more praiseworthy for being her first public appearance on any stage for over a twelve-month, the titian-haired ballerina, arms spilling over with bouquets from well-wishers, bowed and smiled her thanks, whilst the other five dancers in the ballet, stood back and insisted on her taking two solo calls.

Miss Shearer, who became the mother of a baby daughter last August, firmly believes that she can combine happy motherhood with her stage and film career—and give something of herself to both. With her return, the list of ballerinas now on view at Covent Garden reaches awe-inspiring proportions.

M.E.R.

★ ★ ★

Rosemary Lindsay as Swanilda

Royal Opera House. Sadler's Wells Ballet. February 2, *Coppelia*.

Despite the ravages of influenza, *Coppelia* was given a spirited performance by Rosemary Lindsay, Gilbert Vernon and the corps de ballet. Miss Lindsay was technically sure in the part of Swanilda, but occasionally her mime was divorced from the dance. Gilbert Vernon, as Franz, proved that a musical performance is infinitely more satisfying than an exhibition of technical virtuosity; and his partnering was sympathetic throughout. Franklin White brought a realistic touch of pathos to the role of Dr. Coppélius, by weeping when his "doll" came to life. A word must be said for Mary Drage, dancing the Dawn solo in the last act at short notice. Allowing for understandable nervousness, this was a delightful interpretation. Her broad arm movements and noble carriage gave to this variation a radiance which has been lacking for a long time. G.L.

Pamela Fletcher was unable to be present at the first performance of "Orpheus" on February 3, so she asked two fellow critics—a man and a woman—to review the opera/ballet for her. Below, we print the two criticisms—the distaff side first—and readers will find that their opinions differed considerably.

Royal Opera House. February 3.
Orpheus. (Opera by Gluck, Choreography: Frederick Ashton, Decor and costumes: Sophie Fedorovitch.)

THROUGHOUT the long and distinguished choreographic career of Frederick Ashton, one of his happiest talents has been that of always picking the right person for the job—an accurate and penetrating assessment of a particular dancer's capabilities and individual style. This talent can seldom have been in greater evidence than in the choice of Alexander Grant and Svetlana Beriosova for the leaders of, respectively, The Furies in the Underworld, and the Blessed Spirits in the Elysian Fields scenes, in his production of the Opera *Orpheus* at Covent Garden on February 3.

The opening scene at Eurydice's Tomb, forms a sombre and impressive tableaux. Ashton has grouped the chorus on two staircases, mounting on each side, above and behind the tomb, leaving the foreground free for the student dancers, attendant on the tomb. The expressive simplicity of movement as each pair of dancers in turn, slowly approach the tomb in attitudes of statuesque grief, sets a note of solemn dignity.

In the dance of The Furies which comes in Scene 2 of Act 1, Alexander Grant, who dances, not so much with his legs, as with every muscle in his elastic body, writhes and bounds with demoniacal and repellant power. Act II opens in the

(Continued on page 5)

THERE is no ballet sequence in this production of Gluck's *Orpheus* in the accepted way one finds, so often, in opera-ballet, and giving the impression of an extra form of entertainment wedged in, and danced to music so well known that it has become "tea-shop". Indeed, the action of the dancers in *Orpheus* supplies the whole setting for the places visited by Orpheus in his search for Eurydice. First the Furies in the Underworld, and then as the occupants of the Elysian Fields. Is it not significant that in view of the important ballet contribution, that Frederick Ashton should be chosen as producer and choreographer?

From the ranks of the ballet company Mr. Ashton has chosen Svetlana Beriosova and Alexander Grant. Then, having made his choice, most unhappily he wastes the talents of these two fine artists. In the Dance of the Furies Alexander Grant used a considerable amount of energy writhing in the manner of a chief Fury, but looked like a cross between a witch doctor and a yankee jiver. Indeed, he appeared only too grateful to be soothed by the music of Orpheus and so let him pass to the Elysian Fields and Act II, wherein Svetlana Beriosova danced, barefoot, the Dance of Blessed Spirits. Here, what should have been the clean line of Grecian dancing looked needlessly fussy, and was helped in no way by a corps de ballet whose costumes suggested an original outfit for the Centre

Court at Wimbledon, complete with bloomers. This is the only criticism of the otherwise, inspired costume and stage design, the last by the late Sophie Fedorovitch. D.A.



Alexander Grant as the leader of the Furies in the Underworld surrounded by his attendant furies, in Act I of "Orpheus".



(Photo : Houston Rogers)

Svetlana Beriosova as the leader of the Blessed Spirits in "Orpheus".

(Continued from page 4)

Elysian Fields to the music of the unearthly and beautiful Dance of the Blessed Spirits. Svetlana Beriosova's serene and lovely fluidity of movement found here an answering echo in the haunting flute solo which accompanies the dance. Ashton has arranged a touchingly beautiful barefoot dance for Beriosova, in which she bears a dove lightly on one wrist. Some poignant quality of tenderness was evoked by gently caressive movements of the wrist and hand above the bird's head.

One feels that this has been a labour of love for Frederick Ashton, and that the whole work has touched some responsive note in his deeply sensitive and artistically sympathetic nature. M.E.R.

A Suitable Come-back for Shearer?

Royal Opera House. February 13, *Giselle*, *Bonne-Bouche*.

MISS SHEARER'S second guest appearance at Covent Garden was in the exacting and demanding role of Giselle. With Alexis Rassine as Albrecht, she gave a light and almost tentative interpretation. Her first act was the weakest, although her charm and youthfulness in the early part was refreshing, but dramatically she did not carry enough weight as the highly-strung peasant girl who is losing her reason. Miss Shearer is wise, in view of her long absence from ballet, to give a restrained performance in this most difficult of dramatic roles until she has had more time to build up the part.

Her second act, because of her intrinsic daintiness and technical brilliance and because it called for less

Elvin — A Deeply Moving Giselle

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE. February 9, *Giselle*.

LIKE the Spring, Covent Garden these days seems to be 'bustin' out all over' with the blossoming tutus of returning ballerinas! Violetta Elvin, whose first appearance this was since her return from La Scala, was a particularly welcome vanguard to what, we hope, will eventually resolve itself into a dazzling Coronation season line-up.

It is possible to be deeply moved by Elvin's *Giselle*—her village maiden has a quiet simplicity which, being completely artless, makes her subsequent betrayal all the more poignant. Her smiles for Loys are radiant with trust. There is no imperiousness, no anger in her disillusionment, just the bewildered heartbreak of a child. Her mad scene is not conceived on a Grand Opera scale—there is no frenzied tearing of the emotions to shreds. Nevertheless Elvin leaves not the faintest doubt that the betrayal of Giselle's affections has indeed unhinged her mind. Her face bears the vacant, silly smile of the half-witted, the enormous, dark eyes encircle the horrified villagers without seeing them. She quivers like a stricken animal. All Violetta Elvin's mimed scenes have a speaking and forceful clarity. She takes an early opportunity of establishing the fact that Giselle suffers from cardiac trouble, when, during the peasant dance in which she joins with Loys, she suddenly stops, hand to heart, and stag-

gers slightly. This byplay lending credence to her subsequent death from over-exertion and shock.

On this particular night, Elvin's appearance in Act II opened with an unrehearsed incident when, putting in a late appearance through a delay in raising the trap, she appeared to be actually drawn up from the grave by the supernatural power of The Queen of the Willis, the veil being snatched from Giselle's head whilst she was still in the process of rising! The adagio with Michael Somes was beautifully executed, all this second act being tinged with the sad, ghostly sweetness of Giselle's love for Loys. Without doubt, this performance showed that Elvin has acquired a new depth and understanding of this most difficult role. The faintest suspicion of over-acting would remind the spectator that "Giselle" is merely an absurdly archaic melodrama. Instead I was left with the sweet, intangible fragrance of something that actually happened, long, long ago.

Great credit must go to Michael Somes who, as Loys, partnered Elvin with well-timed excellence, and danced throughout with splendid elevation and lightness. The peasant pas-de-deux in Act I was given with delightful freshness and precision by that well-matched pair, Brian Shaw and Nadia Nerina. Brian Shaw brought down the house with a really brilliant solo variation, and Nadia Nerina, dancing with terrific brio and wonderful elevation, showed in addition a new-found delicacy of style. A truly formidable pair.

The Queen of the Willis was danced by Rosemary Lindsay, who despite some beautiful grand jetées, does not appear to have quite the right degree of icy authority necessary. Height and dignity would seem indispensable adjuncts for the part. M.E.R.

NEXT MONTH

Make sure of your copy of "BALLET TODAY" by placing a regular order with your newsagent.

NEW PRODUCTIONS FOR N.Y. CITY BALLET

possessed now seem to have disappeared. Only Janet Reed of the original cast has retained that very important magic.

December held a whole new batch of premieres from the New York City Ballet beginning with George Balanchine's *Harlequinade pas de deux* on December 16, set to music by Richard Drigo with costumes in the Harlequin-Colombine tradition by Madame Karinska. It was finely danced by Tallchief and Eglevsky but is no more than a choreographic bon-mot.

★ ★ ★

Ruthanna Boris's *Kaleidoscope* appeared on December 18. Miss Boris has used the Kabalevsky incidental music to a play called "The Comedians." Costumes are by Alvin Colt and executed by Karinska. I have taken particular note of the costumes because the action of the ballet revolves around its headgear.

The idea in which the dancers "national" hats indicate the dances they

are parodying is a good one and quite witty, but in this case the humour soon becomes quite thin and since there is very little ingenious choreography to sustain the piece, the ballet collapses of its own weight. Melissa Hayden, Todd Bolender, Patricia Wilde, Frank Hobi, and Herbert Bliss dance very well, and it is their inherent sense of fun which adds what little amusement there is in the ballet.

★ ★ ★

On December 23, the New York City Ballet revived Jerome Robbins' well-loved *Interplay* with tiny choreographic changes (thereby making its addition to a new repertoire possible). On the whole, the New York City company does not dance this ballet with quite the spirit of play and youth that the old Ballet Theatre company did. As a result, the lightness and jeunesse *Interplay* once

★ ★ ★

Concertino, presented on December 30, brought 1952 to a close in very much of a fin-de-siècle manner. Balanchine has taken Jean Francaix' *Concertino* and set to it a rather rakish pas de trois. Karinska has dressed Eglevsky as a French dandy circa 1890 moustache and everything. Tanaquil Leclercq and Diana Adams find themselves dressed as two can-can-ish demi-mondes, very chic, very gay and oh—so clever. This is almost too light fare, for one expects more from Balanchine, and *Concertino* is but a wisp of a ballet. There appears to be in the person of the moustachioed Eglevsky and the Francaix music a tenuous thread between the earlier Balanchine-Francaix *A la Francaix* and *Concertino*. If so, then the thread I'm sorry to say, is just a trifle too tenuous.

HOPE SHERIDAN

Newly Formed Group Makes a Brave Start

THE newly formed Sadler's Wells Choreographers' Group gave their first performance (in which members of both Sadler's Wells companies took part) on Sunday, February 1, at 7.30 p.m., and a very creditable first effort it was.

The first item, *Umbrellas*, a professional ballet (Music: John Lanchbery, Choreography: John Cranko) was danced by Yvonne Cartier, David Poole, David Gill and Johaar Mosaval.

Gymnopedie, a charming pas de deux, was beautifully danced by Kathleen Gorham and Pirmin Trecu. Choreography, on definite classical lines, was by Pirmin Trecu who is to be congratulated on a good first effort. Music was by Erik Satie.

A more ambitious piece was *Dream Children* (Music: Edward Elgar, Choreography by Franklin White, Pianists: Mavis Barr and Hilda Grant) danced by Ronald Hynd (the man), Valerie Taylor (Alice), and Shirley Bateman and June Lesley (children). The ballet, based on a quotation from "Dream Children" by Charles Lamb, opened with the man reading in the half-light

and then the children and Alice come to life and dance with him. It was a quiet ballet musically and was danced well. One noticed a resemblance to *Le Spectre de la Rose* with the principal characters reversed.

After the first interval came *Sweet Echo* (Music: Adrian Cruft, Choreography: Ray Powell, Lighting: William Bundy, Pianists: Hilda Graunt and Joan Gilbert), a story ballet of a summer's day in a wood, with a caste of seven including June Lesley, Angela Walton, Rosemary Valaire, Greta Hamby, Leslie Edwards, Anya Linden and Desmond Doyle. It contained a well-thought-out dance by the nursemaid and the children, but the pas de deux of the father (Edward) and the young girl (Linden) was the more inventive. Mr. Powell's choice of Mr. Edwards for the father was a good one and Miss Linden had exactly the right kind of looks and carriage for her role. There seemed rather a lot of entrances and exits in the ballet but nevertheless the whole thing went with a swing.

Lastly came *Somnambulism* (Music: Stan Kenton, Choreography: Kenneth

Macmillan, Lighting: Valerie West). Music that was pure jazz carried along this interesting ballet, in which three central characters, the first dream—Anxiety (Macmillan), the second dream—Premonition (Maryon Lane) and the third dream—Monotony (Poole), danced with a corps de ballet of six. When the curtain rose the three principals were discovered lying on their faces moving in restless and disturbed sleep. Later each danced a solo expressing their respective characters. This thoughtful and sincere work was a credit to Kenneth Macmillan and was much appreciated by the audience.

Throughout the evening, the music was well chosen and effective use was made of lighting.

Before the performance started, Dame Ninette welcomed the 'invited' audience and explained the reasons for starting the group. She said that it was formed to encourage and enable dancers of either company to try their hands at choreography with the added advantage of a discerning audience. Where possible, costumes from stock could be used; otherwise the ballets would be danced in practise dress.

We shall look forward to the next edition of "Sunday Choreographers".

A GREAT LOSS TO THE BALLET WORLD

The tragic death of Sophie Fedorovitch recently is a great loss to the ballet world.

Her designs were marked by a simplicity of line and colour which almost amounted to austerity. But their very practicality redeemed them from being classed as austere, a onetime virtue, now, unfortunately, considered a stigma.

Recent performances by the Ballet Rambert of *Les Masques*, Frederick Ashton's 1933 ballet, showed that even her contemporary designs had enough of the immortal not to date. In this early work was already seen her skill with a minimum of colours. Here black and white have been played with so that one hardly realises no colours have been used. *Symphonic Variations*, at least in so far as the costumes are concerned, also used white, with small touches of black on the men's costumes, varying in position. *Nocturne*, possibly

by Gladys Lasky



the loveliest of Fedorovitch's creations, exploited greys and white in the flower-seller's dress in an unforgettable combination. But this ballet also showed that when she wished she could splash colours unequalled for brilliance and daring by any other designer, without causing offence. Who can ever forget the elegant dresses with their seemingly unmanageable trains? Yet some special skill in their designing and cutting kept them under control and they became an inseparable part of Ashton's moving choreography.

This ballet is another example of her

(above) The late Sophie Fedorovitch in her studio.

(Photo: Gordon Anthony)

★ ★ ★

(top left) Robert Helpmann and Pamela May in possibly the loveliest of Miss Fedorovitch's creations — "Nocturne".

(Photo: Mandinian)

★ ★ ★

(bottom left) Miss Fedorovitch's striking work was notable in "Dante Sonata".

(Photo: Felix Fonteyn)

★ ★ ★

(top right) Few ballet lovers will forget the simplicity of costumes and decor in "Symphonic Variations."

(Photo: Baron)

★ ★ ★

(bottom right) Another scene from "Dante Sonata", showing the well-thought-out contrast of black and white.

(Photo: Felix Fonteyn)

understanding of the demands of ballet, as regards decor as well as costume. The simple columns, balustrade and cyclorama did more to suggest a big city than many crowded backcloths. *Valse Nobles et Sentimentales*, which she decorated for the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, also made use of the very simplest scenery—screens; again, used choreographically as well as scenically. Few artists have succeeded in putting pink costumes on the stage, but here Miss Fedorovitch has used nothing else, her unerring genius never allowing her to descend to the pretty.

Other designers have created more lavish costumes; few can have created so many which not only contributed to our visual pleasure but which also, like Marguerite's dress in Ashton's *Mephisto Valse*, the carnival costumes in *Nocturne* and the girls' tunics in *Symphonic Variations*, have become a lasting part of our memories of these ballets, as unchangeable as the choreography and the music.



They nearly became P.O.W.'s

The story of how the Sadler's Wells Ballet escaped from Holland in 1940 told by
JOHN LEAF

IT is almost thirteen years ago, early in May, 1940, to be exact, that the Sadler's Wells Ballet was very nearly captured by the German Army which was then engaged in overrunning the Low Countries. If such an artistic catastrophe had become an accomplished fact the Company would have had to spend the rest of the war as the unwilling guests of the Fuehrer in one of his internment camps and its subsequent history might have been very different.

After the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 there were several months of comparative calm, the lull before the storm, often referred to as the 'war of nerves' or the 'phony war' and in early May, 1940, it looked as though there would be a considerable period of stalemate on the Western Front and there was no indication that an enemy attack was imminent. This being so, the British Council in association with E.N.S.A., arranged that the Sadler's Wells Ballet should give a series of performances in Holland and Belgium, and on their return journey to England, turn aside to give shows for the British troops stationed in France. Seven performances a week were arranged in the Netherlands and the Company was also to be seen both in Brussels and Antwerp. In the Low Countries it was intended to use 42 dancers but in the French part of the tour, on the instructions of the military authorities, this number had to be reduced to 30 which included two pianists and the stage hands, nobody under eighteen being allowed in the party.

Several of the younger male dancers of the company had had their call-ups slightly deferred so that they could go on this tour. Local orchestras were used in Holland which at first alarmed the late Constant Lambert, the conductor, for he frankly confessed that he did not know a word of Dutch. As a matter of fact, the only linguist of the party was Miss Elizabeth Kennedy, now of the ballet staff at Covent Garden. The company included Ninette de Valois, Ursula Moreton, Margot Fonteyn, Pamela May, June Brae, Mary



Koninklijke Schouwburg
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under the Patronage of His Excellency Sir Neville Bland
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Conductor: Constant Lambert

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Facade

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Choreographer: Ninette de Valois - Frederick Ashton
Assistant Ballet Master: Ursula Moreton
Musical Director: Constant Lambert
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APPEAL TO BALLET SCHOOLS TO HELP OUR SAILORS

BALLET Schools throughout the country are being asked to give displays during Coronation Year in aid of King George's Fund for Sailors. As the Fund has organisers and workers throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland any ballet School which wishes to arrange a public Display in aid of K.G.F.S. will receive every possible help, not only with press publicity but also in the supply of posters, programmes and the like, and in the furthering of good-will with well-known local people.

H.M. the Queen is Patron of this great Naval Charity, and her father before her was President for nearly 20 years while Duke of York. Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma is now President in 1953. King George's Fund for Sailors came into being in 1917 when it was thought desirable to co-ordinate the efforts of the many societies which were working for the welfare of seamen. Today this great organisation acts as the Central Fund for all sea services and, out of the money it collects, makes grants to over 120 marine societies according to their needs. In 1952 alone nearly £200,000 was distributed, a great deal of it going in general welfare work for the widows and orphans of men of the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets.

We feel confident that this worthy charity will appeal to those of our readers who are thinking of organising a Display in 1953. Fuller particulars can be had from the General Secretary, King George's Fund for Sailors, 1 Chesham Street, London, S.W.1.

Sadler's Wells ballerina Beryl Grey, seen here in a new photograph by Baron as Odette in "Le Lac des Cygnes", will leave England on March 14 for a week's visit to Sweden, home of her husband Dr. Sven Svenson. She is to appear as guest star with the Swedish Royal Opera House Ballet at two gala performances on March 21 and 22, the first of which will probably be attended by the Queen of Sweden and other members of the Royal Family. Accompanying her will be John Field who will partner her in a number of pas de deux which, with several solos, she will dance on the first night and will dance the role of Prince Siegfried to her Odette/Odile in the full-length "Le Lac des Cygnes" on the second night. This will be the first time that the full-length "Swan Lake" has been performed at the Swedish Royal Opera.

★ ★ ★

NEWS

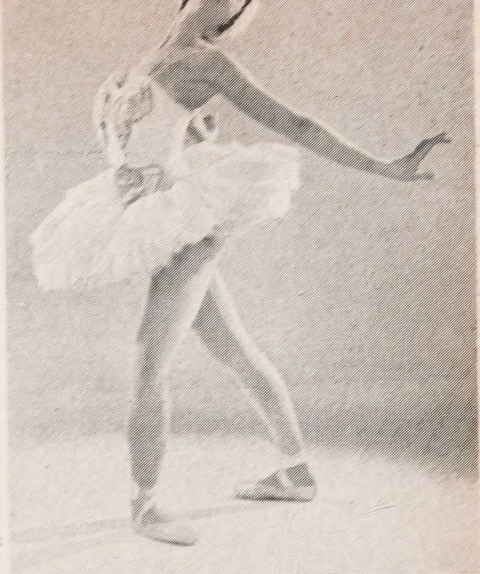
Ballet Joos, the famous German company directed by Kurt Joos, opens for the first time in London since the war for a short season at the Sadler's Wells Theatre on April 7. The theatre announces that the box office for the season will be opened on March 9.

★ ★ ★

At the annual Critics' Circle dinner on March 6, Madame Rambert will answer the toast to the guests.

★ ★ ★

An exhibition of photographs by



Derek Allen of Violetta Elvin in some of her roles, was held last month at 203 Regent Street, London, W.1.

★ ★ ★

Ballet Rambert will take part in the 1953 Canterbury Festival to be held July 15-August 7. The Company will appear at the Marlowe Theatre for one week from July 27-August 1.

★ ★ ★

During a recent performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* at Covent Garden, the Lilac Fairy, guiding Prince Floristan through the enchanted forest, was approaching two slumbering courtiers when watchers were staggered to see one of them suddenly rise to his feet and wander off stage! Whether he suffered from sleep-walking or had just remembered an important date, must remain for ever a mystery!

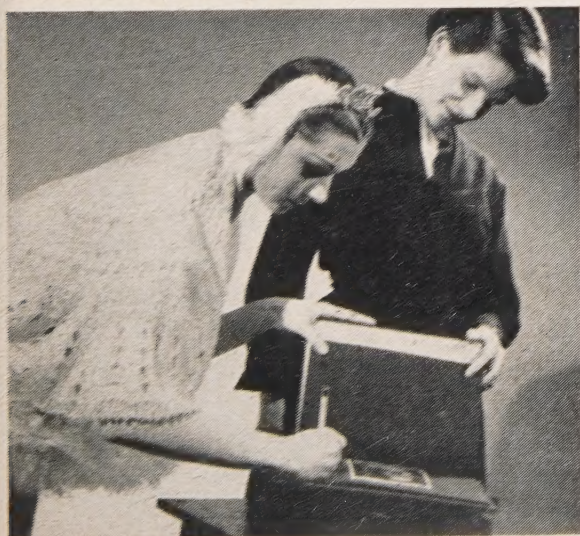
It would seem that even the spells turned out these days are inferior stuff to the pre-war vintage!

★ ★ ★

Peter Brinson, 29-year-old graduate of Oxford University and former commander of a parachute-tank regiment, and at present Director of Research at the Film Centre, is working on the scripts of two new ballet films.

Best-known as the author of the film version of *The Black Swan*, Britain's first stereoscopic ballet film, in which he danced the part of Benno, he has just finished playing the third lead in a film about the war in Italy, made on location near Brighton.

The two new ballets will be for circuit films, not stereoscopic this time. Mr. Brinson feels that there is still a great deal to be learnt with regard to translating ballet to the screen, and that it is as difficult a problem as conveying Shakespeare without exaggeration.



Star meets Fan
After dancing Odette in "Swan Lake" Act II at Covent Garden, Svetlana Beriosova autographs her pictures in one of three books devoted to her career by Miss Garwood, who holds the book open for her. Each book contains original photographs of Beriosova from the beginning of her career to the present day and Miss Garwood hopes to get them all autographed.

Ballet is Everywhere in Russia

**LYDIA LAPINA tells of
the many companies
in the Soviet Union
of which very
few people have heard.**

FOR the outside world, Russian ballet means the ballet of Moscow or Leningrad. A few may have heard of the Kiev ballet. Of the ballet in the rest of the sixteen Soviet Union Republics and the more numerous autonomous republics, with their different races, religions, customs, and ancient art, where today ballet is blossoming in an exciting fashion, very few people are aware.

Not so very many years ago in these republics with names that have an eastern enchantment; Uzbekistan, Azerbaidjhan, Kazakhstan, Daghestan and so on, anything up to 99 per cent of the native population was illiterate. In many of them women were not allowed to dance in public or appear on a stage. In some, their religion did not allow women to look in a mirror. With the coming of the Soviet authority an attack was made on illiteracy and as this succeeded the chains which had for centuries bound the creativeness of these people, were broken for ever.

Soviet musicologists and dance authorities discovered that all these peoples had their own ancient dance forms and music idiom.

In Moscow they opened a theatre ballet school for these many different peoples. (It was nothing to hear twenty different languages spoken in the canteen.) In this school they were taught classical ballet, shown European traditions of acting and dancing, and how to adapt these to their own national cultural traditions. They were very much against slavish imitation of Moscow or Leningrad. Art must always express the strivings of a people in a form that is their own, a form that impresses its own individuality on the universally accepted foundation.

Special attention was paid to the training of choreographers, ballet masters and scenic designers, from among the nationalities themselves. The

advice of the great ballet figures in Moscow and Leningrad would always be at their disposal. But they had to go back to their people knowing how to train their prima ballerinas as well as the corps de ballet.

At the same time visiting companies from Moscow, Leningrad and other old established ballet centres, presented a standard and encouraged a taste for ballet among the general public.

The result of this policy can be seen today in the growing number of first-rate ballet companies in lands that twentyfive years ago still lived in a cultural black-out. It is exciting to watch their development, particularly in creating ballet on modern themes where the classical and the modern are fused into a satisfying new creation. New prima ballerinas, new choreographers and ballet masters and new composers already have their feet half way up the ladder of fame.

A young man to watch is Tankho Izrailov, who is back again in the Ballet Masters' Department of the State Theatre Institute in Moscow, working for a diploma. Izrailov is a young man born in a small mountain village in Daghestan (the Caucasus). In his short career as a ballet master he had already assisted in the presentation on the stage of many of the dances of his native republic. He is specially interested in the national dances of the U.S.S.R., and he is sent by the institute to study these on the spot. He gets very many ideas from the old people in the villages. Kadji Gourba, 86 years old, who dances the Georgian Lezhinka with the astonishing grace, lightness and plasticity of a virtuoso, provided a notebook full of dance drawings for future use.

Izrailov has already had experience in weaving a dance into a play. He arranged the dances for several plays in Moscow. So as not to lose touch with the practical side while working for his diploma he is ballet master to the ballet club of the Moscow Economics Institute.

Mountainous Daghestan, where nearly every village spoke a different language and had different tribal customs before 1917, is just one example of the springing up of ballet. Azerbaidjhan, the oil-bearing Soviet republic that borders on Persia is rich in folk dance, but it never knew ballet of any kind. The first ballet, *Ghyz Galasy*, based in the folk legend *The Maiden's Tower*, was

only put on in 1940. The intervening war held back the growth of ballet; the second Azerbaidjhanian ballet *Gulshen*, to be described in a later article, was produced in 1951. Last year was eventful in the ballet history of the country. A really fine new ballet, *The Seven Beautiful Maidens* was staged. Composer, choreographer, ballet master and producer attracted the attention of Moscow and before many years are past they may be sharing the honours with the capital.

Uzbekistan, known as the Land of White Gold because of its vast areas of cotton fields, is today no whit behind the others. A new ballet *Ballerina* (not to be confused with the film shown in London), was staged last August. Uzbek girls, whose mothers walked about with faces hidden behind thick black veils (the parandjhas), are climbing the ballet ladder to become new Ulanovas and Lepeshinskayas.

Perhaps the most astonishing of the republics in the field of ballet, as of art generally, is Kazakhstan. It is a country with endless desert wastes now being irrigated. There are still nomad peoples in the country who fold up their tents to go to new pastures for their cattle. Today it has its own permanent ballet, and like the others is producing new ballets.

In Georgia one expected the ballet to flourish as soon as there was encouragement. For the Georgians claim that dancing "sur les pointes" originated in Georgia to which legend says it came from the ancient east. In all the folk dances in Georgia the men dance "sur les pointes." The women in the long graceful robes which hide the feet glide along in a flowing rhythm, more graceful than swans.

Of course all the different nationalities in the Soviet Union perform classical ballet, but in each case the interpretation has something individual. Where they show their native originality, however, is in the creation of new modern theme ballets.

It is not to be expected that these new ballets, so young in tradition, are without blemish. By Moscow standards they often show immaturity. They lack the sure touch of the capital's experienced ballet school both in music and choreography. That doesn't seem to matter when there is such a growth of new talent so much encouraged by the public and the government.



(above) Kazakhstan, a country with endless desert wastes, now has its own permanent ballet. This picture shows a scene from V. Velikanov's ballet "Kamben and Nazyam" at the Kazakh State Academic Theatre.

(left) Olga Moiseyeva as Nikiya in the ballet "Bayadere".

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(right) "Solveig", a new ballet to Grieg's music has been staged by the Leningrad Maly Opera Theatre. Here is a scene from Act I—the dance of Olaf (N. Morazov) and Solveig (V. Stankevich).

(Photo: V. Fedoseev)

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(below) "The skirt-dancers" performed by dancers of the Georgian State Ballet.



A STUDENT LOOKS FORWARD



1 Eileen's first thrill is to meet leading soloist Anne Heaton at Covent Garden. Miss Heaton took her to the "stockroom" of the Wardrobe (presided over by Miss Wells) and here she is "trying for size" against Eileen one of the famous dancer's costumes.



2 In the Wardrobe's own paintroom, Eileen watches Barbara, a member of the staff, repainting some buttons on a costume.



3 A paint spray is used to make the dancers' tutus the correct colour and here Barbara demonstrates how it is done.



4 Above the stage itself is the paintroom where the scenery is made. Awed by the size of it, Eileen looks up at the scenery that is being prepared for new ballet "The Shadow".



The start of a new shoe . . . Eileen fascinatedly watches Mr. Di Salvo at work at the last.

From Covent Garden we took Eileen to visit Mr. Di Salvo, famous maker of "bespoke" ballet shoes and she spent a happy time in his shop and workroom while he explained to her how shoes are made and how to measure her own feet to size



6 This is how it should fit . . . He tries on a finished shoe to show her how it fits.

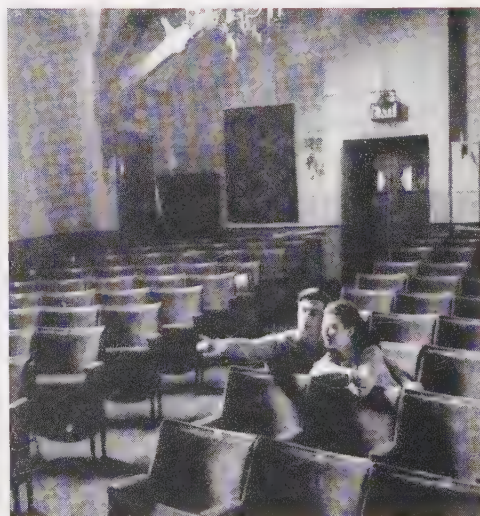
FROM the biggest theatre for ballet—to the smallest. Off we went to the famous Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill Gate, London, official home of Ballet Rambert. Here Eileen found a friend—Alexander Bennet, one of the leading dancers—whom she had known at the Edinburgh Ballet Club and with whom she danced her first "pas de deux".

Full-time student at 14. Two and a half years ago she came to London with her parents and joined the Judith Finlayson School.

This issue, Pamela Fletcher and Derek Allen (who were also responsible for our charming front cover photo of Eileen in ballet dress) showed Eileen something of the background to ballet in this country.

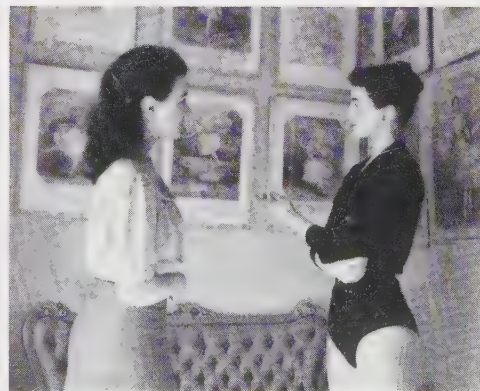


7 (top right) Alexander Bennet points out interesting features of the tiny Mercury Theatre.



8 (left) In the wings . . . Alex. and Eileen see the theatre from the other side.

9 (bottom left) A potential star of tomorrow meets a star of today before a star of yesterday . . . Eileen chats to Ballet Rambert's Mary Munro, in practise dress, in front of the picture of Carlotta Grisi in the Theatre's well known "print room".



Television

ELKA ALVAREZ
writes her last "Profile"
in this series



A very fine new study of Felicity Gray taken by Derek Allen.



(Photo: Tunbridge-Sedgwick)

A wartime shot of one of her solos when she was touring with the Fol-de-Rols.



An early picture of Felicity Gray, or Felicity Andrae as she then was, by Gordon Anthony.



(Photo: Dents de Marney)

In the revue "Tuppence Coloured" Felicity Gray created the Weathervane Dance.

Ballet's Jill of all Trades

BOOTH she herself and Philip Bate, the producer of the programme will tell you that the deviser, script writer and narrator of one of the most popular of all television programmes has no official title. "You see" tall, graceful Felicity Gray will tell you with a smile "there really isn't any one word that will describe what I do in the preparation and presentation of 'Ballet for Beginners'—the best thing you can call me is a 'Jill-of-all-trades'!"

But she is a Jill-of-all-trades who is very necessary to producer and artists alike and the terrific success of these programmes with, mainly, a public who would not normally be interested in ballet, is due, in no small measure, to her practical and shrewd arranging and knitting together of the programme and her attractive rendering of the commentary.

Felicity Gray's name has been cropping up in the arranging—and execution—of the ballet in musical comedies and reviews for a long time. She has made them her forte and there is no doubt that she has attained a degree of perfection in this work that few others have.

Why, when she is a trained dancer—and a good one—has she turned to this side of ballet? "My height" she says "there were never partners tall enough for me when I first started dancing professionally and as I had to earn my living and wouldn't give up either dancing or choreography, I realised I must look to the commercial theatre."

Felicity Andrae (for Gray is her married name—the married Willoughby Gray, the television actor, in 1945) did not start to study ballet until she was 14—indeed, she had not even seen a stage ballet until then. She is the youngest of the four daughters of a Unitarian minister who took a great deal of persuading that Felicity should go on the stage as a dancer and, when he did at last acquiesce, said firmly "if you *are* going to be a dancer, you'd better make sure you are a jolly good one!"

And make sure she did, studying with Miss Phyllis Bedells for five years, with

Madame Karsavina for Russian, Brunelleschi for Spanish, and, later, with Anton Dolin for *pas de deux* work. At 18 she won the Royal Academy of Dancing gold medal and the Pavlova Casket for choreography. Choreography has always been her first love—though, she confesses, these days she gets very little opportunity for pure choreography; so much of her work is the arrangement of other choreographer's creations.

She admits that she cannot remember the chronological order of all the plays and shows she has been in, but some have stuck in her mind as being more important, or more interesting—or just more fun—than the rest.

For instance, there was the six weeks she spent with the Carl Rosa Ballet Company and produced two full-length ballets for them—one of the most enjoyable jobs she has had. "It was a jolly good little company too, but the blitz toured with us. It was 'one of those things'." It was in this company that she first met Domini Callaghan and she gave her her first solo role.

Her television experience did not really start *after* the war, for she arranged and danced in a television ballet for Madame Rambert in 1937 with the famous dancer Frederic Franklin. She tells an amusing tale of how she gave Franklin his first audition. It was also the first she'd ever taken—and it was a toss-up which of them was the most nervous! The producer was—Philip Bate! (After the war when they teamed up again, neither remembered the other however, and were most surprised when they met.) Even a year earlier than this production she had appeared on television in a series of dance recitals of her own work. And the producer each time was Philip Bate!

In 1936, she went to Paris for six months, to study with Kchessinska, and

soon got a job with Woizikowski at the Opera Comique, dancing her own solos in the divertissements. After a while her money ran out, for the pay of a dancer on the Continent in those days was not high. She didn't want to return to England yet, so she took a job in a musical show that was going to America, again managed her own dances and worked there with it for seven months—in New York and Miami—and then returned with it to the London Casino in London's West-End.

She danced in the famous Camargo seasons, was one of the regular "extras" in the Vic-Wells Ballet when it was first founded and went with it to Copenhagen in 1933.

During the war, she joined ENSA and had 18 happy months with the Folde-Rols Concert Party, in charge of the little ballets in the shows and taking part in them herself with the four other dancers in the Company.

She has done a great deal of pantomime and revue work, both dancing and arranging, before and after the war. For three years before the war she worked for the Howard and Wyndham management arranging dances and dancing in both their pantomimes and summer shows.

She has even "broken into" the legitimate theatre and once, when she was "regarding the wreckage of her technique" after an ENSA tour in 1944, had the temerity to go for an audition at the Old Vic before Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir Ralph Richardson. "The astonishing thing was that I got the job—and for three months joined the Old Vic Company in Liverpool, playing *very* small parts indeed, but I learned a lot" she adds with a smile.

It was at London's famous Victorian
(Continued on next page)

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by Eugene Cusack

Interviewed on her arrival in Australia recently, ballerina Sally Gilmour said she hoped to resume dancing as soon as she, husband Dr. Allan Wynn and three-year-old son Simon David had properly settled into their new Melbourne home. Family ties would prevent her joining a regular company, but she hoped to make guest-artist appearances from time to time.

With ranks somewhat depleted the National Theatre Ballet Company will open the Coronation Arts Festival being staged in Melbourne by the National Theatre this year. The fortnight's season will include *Aurora's Wedding*, *Le Carnaval*, *Caprice* and *Pas de Quatre*—the latter to be produced by Marita Lowden, who danced with Ballet Rambert during its Australian and New Zealand tours. New director of the company is Sydney dancer Valerie Tweedie, recently returned from America, whose abstract ballet *Caprice* to music of Prokofiev, will be given a first airing during the season.

Back in Australia with husband baritone Victor Carell, to film and record aboriginal dances in Central Australia, American dancer and folk-dance collector, Beth Dean, found time to give a brief season of folk-dance interpretation for Ballet Guild.

The filming experiment has been made possible by a grant from New York's Wennergren Foundation—brought about by her Australian aboriginal dances collected on her last visit.

MEET FELICITY GRAY cont.

theatre club, The Players, when she was taking part in a season there, that she met her husband who was a founder member of the club. Now they live in a beautiful 15th century manor house at Rainham in Kent with three Yorkshire terriers, one Siamese cat, a rabbit and a guinea pig.

Just after the war, Felicity accompanied her husband to Yorkshire when he joined the West Riding Theatre for the Arts Council. Soon she was arranging any dances included in the plays and then tackling small acting parts in them. And of what variety were those parts! Azora in "Tobias and the Angel," arranging the dancing and playing Iris in "The Insect Play," the herophrodite Androgene in "Volpone" and, lastly, and most important, Regan in "King Lear." It was here, she says, that she decided that actors should learn to dance and dancers to act.

THE contribution of antiquity to the development of the drama is widely recognised, and most ballet students are aware of the great use that has been made of the mythological stories as the plots of ballets through the ages. But we should also know that the design of the interior of the modern theatre owes a great deal to the open-air theatres of the ancient world. Although the form of the auditorium has varied in its detail, it has remained basically the same over more than two

thousand years, that is, a semi-circle with the seats rising in tiers.

The background to these ancient dramas was permanent and architecturally simple, nature often adding details no artist could equal, as at Taormina in Sicily, where beyond the curve of the bay Etna puffs an ever-present smoke-cloud.

The Roman permanent setting was more elaborate than the Greek, and just such a setting was copied by Palladio and Scamozzi in their Teatro Olimpico



This picture of part of the Teatro Olimpico at Vicenza in Italy is typical of the extravagant beauty of the period.

Many readers will remember the gay little review "Tuppence Coloured" which ran so long in London. They may particularly remember the weather-vane number in it. This was entirely Felicity Gray's creation, originally thought up and danced on television. The idea emerged from the problem of finding a dance idea that took up very little space. The weather vane bound to a revolving perch was ideal—it is amazing what you can do on top of a revolving piano stool!

That was the last of the stage shows she was to take part in for a long time. In 1948, the idea for "Ballet for Beginners" was conceived and Felicity Gray was invited to create it. So far, 15 new programmes have been repeated once or twice. Now, during the winter season, a fresh one is presented each month by the splendid team, of which Mrs. Gray is so important a part.

One of her recent "free-lance" jobs that she remembers as 'great fun' was when she coached film star Gene Tierney for her film "Never Let Me Go" in which Miss Tierney played—and danced—the part of a ballerina. "She showed an amazing amount of talent and grace and has most beautiful dancer's hands" says Mrs. Gray.

Felicity Gray believes—and there seems no doubt about it—that she has worked in just about every branch of the entertainment world where dancers and choreographers can be found.

The greatest joy of her new home for urban Mrs. Gray is its large garden. This is the first she has ever had and gardening has speedily become one of her greatest hobbies—though it's mostly hand digging so far, she says! Another hobby, which she shares with her husband, is that of small boat sailing. She is, she asserts, not a real "housewife" in that she is not naturally

THE STAGE

by Gladys Lasky



(above) A view of the Ostia Antica in Italy—a Roman theatre. (below) A theatre devoted to tragedy—the Teatro Tragicca at Pompeii.



at Vicenza in 1584, with its streets seen in perspective through three main archways.

The next stage of development in 16th and 17th century scenic design was the depiction of a scene which could be changed at will, which led, through the "shutters" of Inigo Jones and John Webb, to the wing-flats and cloths with which we are familiar today.

The great popularity of the masque, and later of the ballet, influenced the development of stage scenery to a larger extent than has, perhaps, been realised. Since so much space had to be left for the numerous performers who took part in these court entertainments, scenery had to be reduced to a minimum, and "realistic" perspective vistas were painted on a cloth, not built up on the stage itself. Even when opera temporarily ousted ballet from first place in popularity, a ballet had to be included in the opera, with consequent restrictions on setting and production.

Yet another factor which affected scenery design was the position from which the principal spectator would view the entertainment. This had once been from the floor of the theatre, right in front of the other members of the audience (to the subsequent blocking of their view when royal head-dresses were plumed). But when ballet became the royal fashion the artist's viewpoint had to be transferred to an upstairs level, from where the best view of the dancing was to be obtained.

The perfection of stage machinery led to the use of multiple and quickly-ac-

complished scene changes so that, by the 18th and 19th century, ballets of innumerable scenes could be presented. They must, in their quick changes of *locale* and lavishness have resembled, in a way, the spectacular "costume" films of today. But such delightful days of "magic" are gone. The transformation scene is now reserved almost exclusively for the pantomime, while the balletomane, with few exceptions, must suffer a loss of atmosphere as the curtain is lowered for several minutes and the audience breaks the spell with its trite whispers and the crackle of cellophane sweet-wrappings.

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domesticated, but she likes things to "look nice" in her lovely old-world home and when the occasion arises will work herself to a standstill making sure that it does—but "it's dusting the same things and washing the same pots day after day that gets me down" she adds.

Her ambition? To get level with her life—but she doesn't think she will ever achieve that!

Her opinions on ballet—as an art, as a career and as an entertainment? To round off this article about a warm and human person, we will leave her to give, in her own words, her provocative opinions on these controversial subjects:

"Ballet can most certainly be an art—and it can be anything but! It produces such devotion in its followers that they embrace with enthusiasm a career which is very short-lived, insecure, expensive to train for and with continuing expense throughout one's career (classes, tights, shoes, massage, etc.), and in which it is difficult to earn more

than one spends. Surely only an art can inspire such madness! Undoubtedly, if one has the desire for dancing, nothing else can take its place.

"As a career—well, ballet is not a 'cinch'. One must remember that, of the thousands of dancers trained, only a very few are lucky enough to get into a ballet company, let alone either of the Sadler's Wells companies which are ultimately the most secure ones. All other dancers must adapt themselves to the commercial theatre, films and television. A good, useful dancer has far more chance of making a good living than one who is in any way unusual, even if she is quite brilliant in certain things.

"I do find nowadays a terrible devotion to sheer, solid, sweated technique. Technical accomplishment in classical work seems to be the only aim for many dancers. Musical feeling, sense of style and of phrasing, ability to express emotion, to act—all these are left far

behind technique. I come away from too many performances these days sad at the lack of these things, since without them one cannot be called an artist—and the ballet dancer with rhythm, as opposed to ability to dance in time, is a rarity today. These talents in front of—not trailing far behind—a beautiful, strong, sure technique make ballet into an art. This also means that more choreographers and ballet masters and mistresses should concentrate on these things. There are so few dancers who can convey *nuance* these days; and so many who dance any role which is based on a classical technique in exactly the same style. Either they can't give style, *nuance* and musical feeling or they are not asked to. Either situation is bad for ballet and in both the remedy lies in the hands of the ballet masters and choreographers, since the dancers themselves will naturally dance in the way in which they are rehearsed and pro-

(Continued on page 22)

The Yugoslav States Company

by Ursula Rasica

THE Yugoslav States Company of National Songs and Dances has recently returned to Zagreb from a two-month tour abroad. They danced in Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki and on their way home gave performances in Stuttgart and Munchen. Everywhere they went they were met with great enthusiasm and admiration, particularly in Norway and at the end of their season at the Detnye Theatre, Oslo, they promised to make a return visit. Next they went to Sweden and in Stockholm performed before 2,000 people every night at the Circus, giving 17 shows. In Finland, too, the Company was acclaimed and, after their season in Helsinki, they gave two performances in Germany—one in Stuttgart. In February they were scheduled for another tour of Germany.

The Company is composed of about 40 members, most of whom are students, but a few are workers and peasants. Love of art, music and dancing drew them together and they had no previous training whatever. Artistic director since 1949 is Professor Levakoirc and about a year ago Madame Ana Maletic joined the company as second artistic director. Professor Lavakoirc keeps strictly to the true folk dance, while Madame Maletic adapts these folk dances to the limitations of the stage without losing their essential character. There is no doubt that the two points of view in the one company give a greater variety and richness to the interpretation of the dances.

This Company became professional only a short time ago and the results of its recent training are really amazing. Their high standard of technique was much praised by all the critics. The members have formed themselves into a complete whole and should be considered and appreciated as such, since solo dances do not exist in folk dancing and it is always the collaboration and teamwork of a group that we admire.

The Fascinating Old Vic

NO ONE was more unlike the typical manageress of a music hall in the toughest part of London than Miss Emma Cons who was short and prim in appearance and who always wore a tight bodice, a long skirt and a bonnet. She was, however, the possessor of a potent personality and was quite capable of quelling the comedians who spoke more than was set down for them. Any ribald joke from the stage resulted in the curtain being brought down summarily on the offender. Some of the old time pros used to like to have a game with the old lady. Harry Paulo, the famous clown, after he had retired was induced to speak from the Old Vic stage on the virtues of temperance. He stated that he would never again touch strong "licquer" and then, looking at Miss Cons in her box and winking added 'unless it it made of the right stuff.'

Several organisations which today are very flourishing had their origin at the Old Vic in the days of Miss Cons. Morley College, which now has its own headquarters in the Westminster Bridge Road, was one of the first evening schools to be established in London and functioned for over forty years of its existence from the old dressing rooms of the Victoria Theatre. The Sadler's Wells Opera Company was founded about 1895 as the Old Vic Opera Company and the Vic-Wells Ballet Company had many of its early performances in the Waterloo Road. The work that the Old Vic did for opera and music is not now generally appreciated. Two of Miss Cons' early soloists were Sims Reeves and Ben Davies. The first London performance of the "Immortal Hour" was given at the Vic by the Glastonbury artists. Just after the first World War some very creditable performances of Tristan and Isolde were given by the Opera Company. Dame Nellie Melba realised what the theatre had done for the cause of opera and in 1926 gave a gala performance there which was actually her last professional appearance in this country.

In 1898 Miss Cons had been joined at the Vic by her niece, Miss Lilian

Baylis, who realised the potential drawing power of what are today known as 'the pictures.' As early as 1902 she preceded the operatic performances by the E. Holmes Stores Matagraph. Pictures were also shown before the early Shakespeare performances. In the autumn of 1914 Miss Baylis, with the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Matheson Lang and many others founded the Old Vic Shakespeare Company. The Langs were most helpful, lending scenery and costumes and Mrs. Lang playing the roles of Beatrice in "Much Ado" and Katherina in the "Show."

One of the problems arising from the production of "Much Ado" was how to obtain the settings for the chapel scene. Eventually Mr. Hurry, the local undertaker, was persuaded to lend the fittings of his private chapel. Mr. Hurry became quite drama minded and for many years always lent such coffins as were required for the Shakespeare productions. The introduction of the works of Shakespeare to those living in the Waterloo Road district resulted in one of the soundest commentaries on the plot of Hamlet that has yet been heard. One of the old ladies from the Lower Marsh, coming down the gallery stairs of the Old Vic was overheard saying "Them 'Amlets had a deal of trouble in the family."

The Old Vic Company was started with very little capital and without any flourishing of trumpets. Also, the time did not seem propitious for such an enterprise, when the country was engaged in fighting the greatest war which up to then had menaced civilisation. Many said that the experiment was doomed to failure. Miss Baylis, however, was a woman who never knew when she was beaten and as a result almost always achieved her objective. The company since its formation has presented all the plays in the first folio with, in addition, "Pericles." It has been seen in most of the large cities of England and Scotland as well as Belfast and Cardiff. During the war years it played at such diverse places as the Pier Pavilion, Llandudno, and the Banqueting Hall in Durham Castle.

It is almost as well known abroad as in England having visited New York, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Paris, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Western Germany, Finland, Zurich, Lisbon, Athens, Egypt and Malta. The first producer of the company was Ben Greet, who had as

his leading lady for the four years that he was at the theatre, Miss Sybil Thorn-
dike. In the summer of 1916 the com-
pany played the Festival at Stratford
on Avon. The coming of Robert
Atkins to the Old Vic soon after the
first world war resulted in a consider-
able raising of the artistic standard of
the company. Atkins, besides produc-
ing such rarities as the three parts of
"Henry the Sixth" and "Titus Andronic-
us" also staged for a run the first pro-
fessional production of "Peer Gynt"
with Russell Thorndike in the title role.
He it was above all others who first
put the Vic permanently on the London
theatrical map. Previously the critics
had only noticed the theatre when such
great artists as Ellen Terry and Gene-
vieve Ward were playing there.

It was while Atkins was at the Vic
that the company first went overseas
playing for a week at Brussels at the
request of the Belgian government.
Shortly after Atkins left the theatre
Edith Evans and Balliol Holloway went
there to play a round of Shakespearean
parts. Miss Evans modestly said that
she had come to the theatre to learn
how to play Shakespeare but she blazed
a trail which was later followed by
many talented artists, among whom were
Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud, Ralph
Richardson, Laurence Olivier, Maurice
Evans, Michael Redgrave, Roger Live-



This amusing cartoon—The Last of the Victoria Theatre—was drawn in 1880.

sey, Alec Guinness and many others.

In 1931 Miss Baylis was able to re-
open Sadler's Wells and to run it in
conjunction with the Old Vic. This
resulted ultimately in the opera and
ballet companies being located in North
London and the drama company being
left in undisputed possession of the
Vic. Two years later Tyrone Guthrie
commenced his long association with
the theatre. It would be difficult to
overestimate what he has done for it.
He eliminated the last vestige of par-
ochialism and made the company a force
in world theatre.

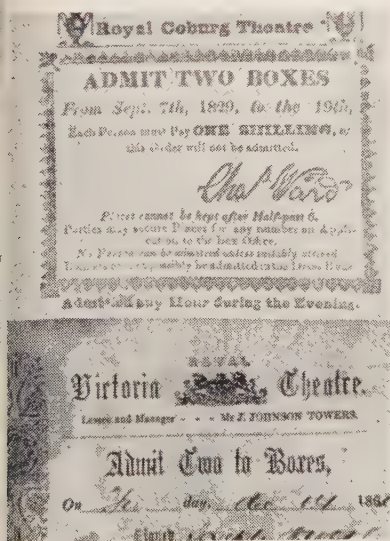
Just before Miss Baylis' death in 1937
she was able to realise one of her am-
bitions to see her company play Hamlet
on the battlements of the Castle of
Elsinore the setting of the play. There
was only one slight contretemps. The
Danish spectators brought their dogs to
the performance and they seemed to
think that the upset at the end of the
play scene was a kind of 'free for all'
and wanted to join in!

After the death of Miss Baylis, Mr.
Guthrie took complete control and
piloted the company very skilfully
through the difficult war years. It will
be remembered that at the outbreak of
hostilities all the London theatres were
closed. Thereupon Mr. Guthrie organ-
ised two touring companies and later
moved the headquarters to Burnley.
Later he recruited a Liverpool Old Vic
Company which played five very success-
ful seasons at the Playhouse in that city.
Occasional London season were later ar-
ranged at the New, the Playhouse and

the Lyric, Hammersmith. Shortly be-
fore the end of the war the first of six
long winter seasons took place at the
New Theatre. The Old Vic, which had
been damaged by enemy action was not
rehabilitated and reopened until Novem-
ber, 1950. Shortly afterwards His Late
Majesty King George the Sixth, ac-
companied by Queen Elizabeth and
Princess Margaret honoured the theatre
with a visit.

In 1946 the Old Vic governors were
invited to form a Bristol Old Vic Com-
pany to play at the historic Theatre
Royal in that city. The present success
of the company is mainly due to the
many seasons of hard work put in by
Mr. Hugh Hunt, the present director
of the London company. It must be
emphasised that the success of the Old
Vic organisation has not been due to
the work of any one person but to the
loyal services of generations of talented
artists and technicians who have all
given of their best, often in the face of
considerable financial sacrifice.

The Queen Mother has always taken
a keen interest in the work of the
theatre and has visited it on many oc-
casions. Just before the outbreak of
the last war she came to a performance
of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and
brought with her the present Queen and
Princess Margaret. Her Majesty Queen
Elizabeth accompanied by the Duke of
Edinburgh, has already paid a private
visit to the Old Vic this season to see
"Romeo and Juliet," and next May, also
with her husband, proposes to pay an
official visit to see "Henry VIII."



Theatre tickets of yesterday . . . these
passes admitted (above) to two boxes
at the Old Vic from September 7-19,
1829 and (below) on December 14,
1860.

THE NEW LA SCALA SEASON

Introducing our new Rome correspondent

OLGA R. SIGNORELLI

THE ballet season at La Scala begins each year on December 31, and this time brought us a number of surprises. In *Swan Lake*, Act II, with which the programme began, Violetta Elvin was indeed celebrated. The aristocracy of her appearance and of her interpretation came convincingly to the fore in this role and we were able to admire particularly how excellently she managed to subdue her technique to the spiritual demands of the *pas de deux* and her solo variation. The movements of her arms, truly imbued with a lyrical soul, gave her interpretation that complete superiority which, with the exclusion of all mannerisms, becomes the stamp of what constitutes absolute truth in art.

From the creative point of view the presentation of *The Creatures of Prometheus* was the most significant event of the evening. This ballet, originally produced in 1801, had presented a considerable challenge to a number of choreographers who had, alas unsuccessfully, tried to bridge the discord existing between music and libretto. Aurelio M. Milloss, its present choreographer, set himself this task and his effort attained great success at the Royal Opera Houses of Budapest and Rome and at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires before being presented at La Scala in a version further perfecting his conception. His outstanding success in this work is the result of his choreographic method of creating a new style for the usage of the academic vocabulary of the dance, a new form of the classical ballet in no way connected with neo-classic movement developing elsewhere. His new ballet must belong among the best of the present La Scala repertoire. Unfortunately, Salvatore Fiume's costumes and decor were not altogether uniform in style.

The corps de ballet danced excellently. Gilda Maiocchi was an outstanding Calliope, Vera Colombo a brilliant Terpsichore and Aldo Santambrogio, Ugo dell'Ara and Walter Venditti as Prometheus, Apollo and Pan respectively excelled themselves. But it was the two principals, Olga Amati and Giulio Perugini, as *The Creatures*, who created the greatest impact and established themselves firmly as artists of international calibre. We thus have evidence again of the strong renaissance in Italian ballet.

As the third work of the evening we

saw a presentation of Massine's *Capriccio Espanol* with himself as principal dancer. Naturally this work was much admired in Milan but the success of the ballet was overshadowed still by the success of Massine the dancer. It is a miracle that Massine even today dances with his customary youthful elan; time seems to have left no mark on him and only further ripened his artistic maturity. Dancing side by side with him Luciana Novaro did not have an easy task but she nonetheless managed to rise to Massine's artistic level. Special praise must go to Nicola Benois for his beautiful costumes and decor.

The closing ballet was Milloss's *Petrouchka*, danced in the traditional A. Benois costumes and against his original decor. Milloss achieved a great success in this version adding a great number of novel ideas to bring a new dynamism and constructive quality to the work. But the original mood of the ballet as intended by Fokine has remained unchanged.

Violetta Elvin as the Ballerina showed a new side to her manifold talents. She danced with overpowering rhythmic precision, full of charm and courteous irony. Ugo dell'Ara interpreted the title-role excellently especially in the second scene. Perugini as the Moor was both fittingly pompous and full of humour. Outstanding, too, was Gino Pessina as the Charlatan.

The entire evening was festive and full of promise for the future. The artistic and technical progress of the La Scala Ballet have created attention.

Violetta Elvin's participation provided an example not only of her own art but also of the high level of British ballet of which Miss Elvin was such a successful representative at La Scala.

A happy picture after their performance of "The Three Cornered Hat" at La Scala of Antonio and Mariemma with ballerina Violetta Elvin who was also a guest star at La Scala.

(Photo :
Erio Piccaglianti)

Spanish Dancers

Antonio in "Tricorne"

The first appearance of the famed Spanish dancer Antonio as the Miller in Massine's popular ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat* was made at La Scala this season. This was the first time, too, that Antonio—partnered by Mariemma—has danced in a ballet created essentially in the classical dance idiom and with a company of classical dancers. Massine, who was in Milan to teach the two Spanish guests, accommodated both with a number of small changes in the choreography. Nevertheless, the task given to Antonio and his partner was not an easy one and speculation was rife whether the two would be able to surmount the difficulties facing the authentic Spanish dancer in a classical ballet like *The Three-Cornered Hat*.

The success which Antonio achieved on January 24 was therefore a double one. He danced the role with uncanny verve and precision and added to it his own brilliant touches of Spanish flavour. With every entrance he, a tiny figure compared with the supporting La Scala Ballet, dominated the stage and overshadowed his new partner Mariemma who was not completely convincing as the Miller's Wife. Gino Pessina made a fine Corregidor and the excellent support given by the corps de ballet as a whole contributed largely to Antonio's richly earned success.

Endless curtain calls and shouts of "Massine" could not however induce the great dancer and choreographer to appear on stage as well. In a great and generous gesture Massine, who created the role of the Miller in this, his own ballet, left the evening's triumph to a richly deserving successor. A.D.



FESTIVAL BALLET IN PARIS

French News by Ferdinand Reyna



A distinguished audience listening to Anton Dolin speaking at the Institut Choreographique of Paris. (left to right, standing) Madeleine Lafont, and Michel Renault, (seated) Lycette Darsonval, Nathalie Leslie, Serge Lifar, Nina Vyroubova and Youli Algaroff.

The opening of the Paris season of London's Festival Ballet on January 13, was preceded by a cocktail party given by the British Council, and followed by a dinner given by the Critiques de la Danse de Paris, at which members of the art world were present.

In spite of some adverse criticism of the decorations, especially of *Casse-Noisette* which they made the mistake of presenting in their first programme, the Company was warmly welcomed; even the section of the press which is normally biased against foreign companies had to admit that the production of *Petrouchka* was far superior to any other seen in Paris for years, both from the point of view of interpretation and in its fidelity to Fokine's creation. *Giselle* too, especially the second act, was a great success, due to its perfectly-rendered romantic atmosphere. Anton Dolin's interpretation was that of a great artist, controlled, eloquent and elegant. Nathalie Leslie was a most moving *Giselle*. Her *Black Swan*, with John Gilpin, was an absolute triumph. Gilpin has a rare distinction, and his technique can bear comparison with the greatest of our day. In *Le Spectre de la Rose*, which he danced with Anita Landa, one realised that he took great pains in the preparation of his roles. Vassili Trunoff and Daphne Dale were noticeable in *Prince Igor*. The performance of *Don Quichotte* by Sonia Arova and Oleg Brianski was remarkable. Paris has not forgotten Belinda Wright in *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit*, and it was with real pleasure that we saw her again. *Symphony for Fun* was given a spirited performance by the whole company.

I would say that Dolin seems to have

given new life to the classics. His respect for tradition has rejuvenated them, not aged them as one might expect. His company seems to me to have been created after his own image, so that one recognises throughout that nobility and dignity which stamp Dolin himself when he dances.

The last night of the season, February 8, Dolin and his company were called on to the stage twenty times or more. Then a crowd of admirers gathered on the stage. Among the crowd was a little old lady, who pushed her way through the people and the scenery to embrace Dolin. It was the great Olga Preobrajenska, who had come matinee and evening to applaud Anton Dolin and his company.

★ ★ ★

On January 28 Jean Babilée made his official début at the Paris Opéra, in *Giselle* with Liane Daydé. Most disappointing. Daydé danced the part well enough but did not seem to feel the role. Babilée lacks lyricism, and his variation in the second act, danced impeccably, was no more than a piece of *bravura*, completely out of harmony with the story. Nevertheless, with the brilliant Paulette Dynalix as the Queen of the Wilis, and Max Bozzoni as Hilarion, it was worth seeing. *Le Spectre de la Rose*, also danced by Daydé and Babilée, was no more successful.

The René Blum Prize, awarded annually by the Association des Ecrivains et Critiques de la Danse de Paris, has been given to Claire Sombert, for her remarkable début with the Janine Charrat Company.

At the Opéra, Serge Lifar has been nominated technical adviser; Albert

Aveline is now director of the Ballet and Choreographic School. Harald Lander is *maitre de ballet*.

Youli Algaroff, engaged as *premier danseur étoile*, made his Opéra début in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Bari and Lacotte have been promoted to the rank of *premiers danseurs*.

★ ★ ★

On March 11, Roland Petit's new company will open at the Théâtre Empire. Colette Marchand and Nicole Amigues are the stars. Petit will present six new ballets.

★ ★ ★

The Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas ended its Paris season on January 7. Their latest new ballet, *Piège de Lumière*, is a very spectacular work, the specially composed music by the 23 year old Jean-Michel Damase being worth individual mention. Leading roles in this ballet with choreography by John Taras were danced by Skouratoff, Golovine and Rosella Hightower.

Bronislava Nijinska created a new *pas de deux* for Skibine and Hightower to Saint-Saens' well known *Rondo Capriccioso*, which showed the choreographer's skill in her use of the classical idiom.

Tertulia, a slight ballet based on back-stage intrigue between French and Spanish dancers has choreography by Ana Ricarda, and was danced by Jacqueline Moreau, Ricarda and Skouratoff.

Marjorie Tallchief scored a real personal triumph on her reappearance after the birth of her twin boys. Her *Don Quichotte* with Skibine is dazzling.

BALLET AT HOME

45 R.P.M. RECORDS

Dances from the Ballet Gayeneh by Khachatryan played by Nicolai Malko and the Philharmonia Orchestra. H.M.V. 45 r.p.m. 7P103.

Dance of the Young Maidens, Sabre Dance and Lullaby are all included on this record and though most people know the popular Sabre Dance many may not know the other two melodies. Here is another ballet that I should like to see performed here. The glimpses of it on this record are a fascinating foretaste of it.

Invitation to the Dance by Weber (orch. Berlioz) played by Igor Markevitch and the Philharmonia Orchestra. H.M.V. 45 r.p.m. 7P129.

One of the first pieces of music for ballet recorded on the 7-inch 45 r.p.m. records is Weber's famous composition to which *Le Spectre de la Rose* is danced. All the swing and movement of the waltz is well expressed in this rendering.

P.J.

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FORTHCOMING BALLET

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

March 3	Ballet Imperial The Shadow (1st perf.)
March 4	Bonne-Bouche Les Patineurs The Shadow Apparitions
March 5	Mam'zelle Angot* Symphonic Variations Apparitions
March 6	Ballet Imperial The Shadow Mam'zelle Angot
March 7 (mat.) (even.)	Ballet Imperial Apparitions The Shadow The Shadow A Mirror for Witches Les Patineurs
March 9-14 (inc. Sat. mat.)	Le Lac des Cygnes
March 16	Giselle† Mam'zelle Angot
March 17	Ballabile The Shadow A Mirror for Witches
March 18	The Shadow Symphonic Variations Mam'zelle Angot
March 19	Le Lac des Cygnes*
March 20	The Shadow Le Lac des Cygnes†
March 21 (mat. & ev.)	Mam'zelle Angot Le Lac des Cygnes
March 23	Ballabile Symphonic Variations A Mirror for Witches

MEET FELICITY GRAY

(Continued from page 17)

duced.

"The gap between the quality and interest of work in the commercial theatre (including films and television) and of work in ballet companies is rapidly closing. All dancers owe a great debt to Agnes de Mille for her pioneering in this field. Unfortunately, the English managements still lag behind their American counterparts; more and more Americans are using dances as an integral part of a show, which in England they are still often treated as a "fill-in" between the principals' and the comedians' scenes, which is heart-breaking for all concerned.

"Personally, I feel strongly that every dancer should have some hobby or second string, which can earn them a bit over the bad times and which can give them a life-line to the outside world. In ballet companies particularly, dancers live such an enclosed life that many of them lose touch with the real world and with the other arts; this does their artistry and personality no good at all in the long run. I'm all for dancers being persons in the round, not just exquisite beings from another world!"

March 24

The Shadow *
Le Lac des Cygnes†
Act II

March 25

Job
Les Patineurs
Apparitions
Ballet Imperial*

March 26

The Shadow
Apparitions
Ballet Imperial

March 27

Giselle†
Ballabile
Giselle*
Les Patineurs
The Shadow
Symphonic Variations
Job
Ballabile
Le Lac des Cygnes

March 28

(mat.)
(ev.)

March 30

March 31

Checkmate
Mam'zelle Angot
Les Sylphides†
Checkmate

April 1

Giselle*
The Shadow

April 2

Les Patineurs
Les Sylphides†
Apparitions

April 4 (mat.)

Ballet Imperial
Les Sylphides†
Mam'zelle Angot
Ballet Imperial
Le Lac des Cygnes

(ev.)

April 6

Checkmate
Giselle†
Ballabile
Ballabile

April 7

Veneziana (1st perf.)
The Shadow
Checkmate
Le Lac des Cygnes,

April 8

April 9

Veneziana
The Shadow
Veneziana
Ballet Imperial*

April 10

Giselle†
Bonne-Bouche
Ballabile
Symphonic Variations
Veneziana
Les Patineurs
Bonne-Bouche
Veneziana

April 11 (mat.)

(ev.)

* Guest artist: Shearer
† Guest artist: Markova

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

March 21 (mat.)

Assembly Ball
Ile des Sirenes
Valse Nobles et Sentimentales
The Great Detective

March 28 (mat.)

Les Rendezvous
Harlequin in April
Pineapple Poll
Coppelia

April 4 (mat.)

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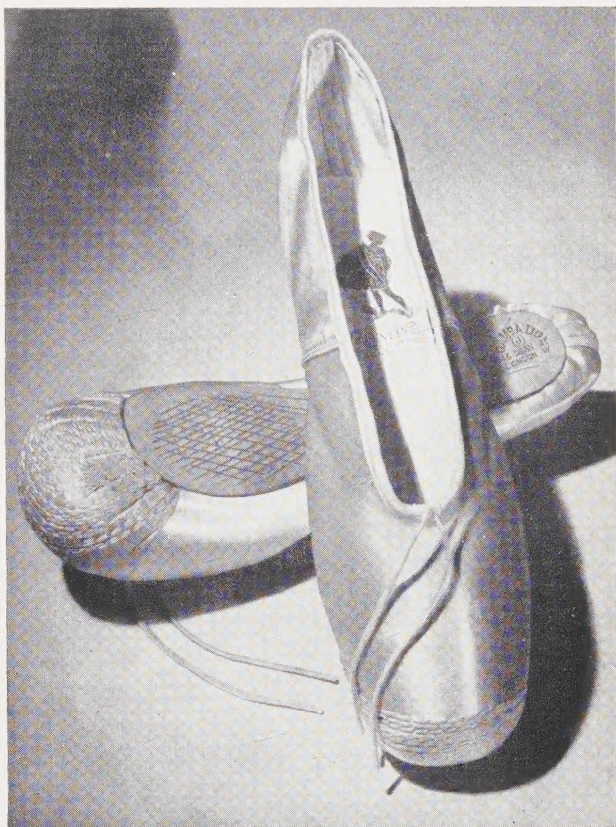
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Anne Heaton as the witch girl Doll in "Mirror for Witches"